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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

16 April 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR/INTELLIGENCE

FROM: Assistant Director for National Estimates

SUBJECT: SE-26: The Soviet Notes on German Unity as a Possible
Indication of a More "Conciliatory" Soviet Policy
(Draft for Consideration by the Board)

1. The attached memorandum gives the Board view on recent Soviet views, centering the discussion upon the most important Soviet action, that with regard to German unity.

2. In the Board's view, recent Soviet moves are designed to weaken the unity of the West and retard Western rearmament. Nothing has been said or done by the Kremlin thus far which indicates a willingness to make real concession in order to lessen international tension.

3. The Board believes, therefore, that the conclusion of NIE-53 remains valid, and that no further estimate is needed at this time. Will you be good enough to inform the Board whether you concur in this belief?

SHERMAN KENT

Attachment

DOCUMENT NO. 1
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☒ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 25 FEB 81 REVIEWER: 018557

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OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

16 April 1952

SUBJECT: SE-26: THE SOVIET NOTES ON GERMAN UNITY AS A POSSIBLE INDICATION OF A MORE "CONCILIATORY" SOVIET POLICY (Draft for Consideration by the Board)

1. Recent Soviet moves are open to the interpretation that the Kremlin is seeking a general relaxation of international tension, whether merely to lessen Western will to rearm, or genuinely to produce a calmer international atmosphere.

2. The recent Soviet notes on German unity are the most striking indication of such a possible shift in Soviet policy. In the first of these notes, the Kremlin called for a peace treaty with a united, neutralized, and rearmed Germany. In the second note, the Kremlin asked for immediate four-power discussion of the terms upon which free all-German elections should take place. If the Kremlin is actually prepared to permit free elections in East and West Germany, and to permit German unification and rearmament, these concessions would represent a real and significant shift in Soviet policy toward Germany, and might indicate a shift in the world policy of the Kremlin.

3. While such a shift is possible, we believe the Soviet proposals are designed merely to prevent West German rearmament and the integration of West Germany with the West.

4. The EDC and contractual negotiations with West Germany are now at a crucial stage. The Kremlin probably estimates that if they are not signed within the next few weeks, not only will there be no chance to secure ratification before Congress adjourns, but Congressional sentiment will be adversely affected with regard to the larger program of military aid to the free world. The Kremlin probably also estimates that European opinion is in such delicate balance that a few months' delay might be fatal to the rearmament program. Therefore, if the Kremlin can delay the conclusion of the EDC and contractual agreements even for a few weeks, the results may be most serious for the whole Western defense program. On the other hand, the Kremlin probably estimates that if the Western powers refuse to discuss terms for all-German elections, public sentiment in West Germany, Britain, and France may turn so strongly against the EDC and contractual agreements that the governments of these countries will be unable to complete the agreements.

5. The Soviet proposals for German unity come at the time when they can do the most harm to the West. Moreover, the proposals commit the USSR to do nothing more than talk, and the Kremlin has never been averse to protracted discussion.

6. We believe, therefore, that the estimate in NIE-53, "Probable Soviet Courses of Action with Respect to Germany during 1952," (19 February 1952), remains firm:

"In order to delay West German integration with the West and West German rearmament, the Kremlin might attempt negotiations on free elections throughout Germany, but only to gain time. The Kremlin almost certainly believes that free elections would result in a repudiation of Communism in East Germany. Moreover, the Kremlin would not be satisfied that a united Germany which was not under Soviet control could be kept neutral, or that Germany, once free, would not eventually rearm and turn against the USSR. We believe, therefore, that the Kremlin is unlikely actually to permit free elections to take place, even if the Kremlin were convinced that by this means it could block West German integration with the West and West German rearmament. As a tactical manoeuvre, the Kremlin might remove some of its more overt control mechanisms, including some of its military forces. We do not believe, however, that the Kremlin would so relax its control over East Germany as to affect the foundations of Soviet authority."